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The church and country life. Pamphlet issued
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DON'T BREATHE ON THE THERMOMETER

by
Warren H. Wilson, Ph. D.

The state of the country church is a good register of the state of country life. Churches respond to any deficit in the prosperity of the people. They record to a nicety the economic and social experiences of the population in which they stand. Throughout the Middle States, the country churches exhibit at the present time, the evidence of industrial disturbance. They are affected by the retirement of farmers from the countryside to the towns and by the wrong methods of agriculture, which have impoverished the community life in the farming sections.

Some ministers think to remedy this condition by reviving the church alone. When I was a boy, I remember breathing on the thermometer. It had the effect of heating up the thermometer for a time, but it did not improve the weather, and the mercury fell immediately afterward to as low a figure as before. The only way to revive the country church is to revive the rural community. Christian people are bound to warm up the town who assist in the revival of rural prosperity. Then the temperature of the church will rise and the spiritual life of the whole people will partake of the social prosperity which has been effected in the community.

For this purpose the missionary agencies of our churches are working in the Eastern States in close co-operation with agricultural experts. Such men as Gifford Pinchot, President of the Conservation Commission; L.H. Bailey, Dean of the Agricultural Department of Cornell; Kenyon L. Butterfield, President of Massachusetts Agricultural College; Harry Hayward, Director of the Agricultural Department of Delaware College, are acting in recognition of the principle stated by a great agricultural editor; "There will never be a revival of rural prosperity without a revival of religion."

"The One Day Conferences on the Country Church", which are being held in the great agricultural centres by the Presbyterian Department of Church and Labor, express this co-operation of all interests for the revival of the rural community. It is not enough that the soil be made more productive, nor

even is it enough that the farmer shall secure better profits. The social life of the country community must be itself elevated, and to effect this all who have to do with the life of the people in the country must work together.

This co-operation is based on the fact that country life is one. The whole country community meets and is embodied in each resident in the country town or farming section. It is impossible to secure even agricultural prosperity or increased profits without a better country church and a better country school.

The duty of the Church in this emergency is the duty of agitation. Religious people must be brought to the acceptance of a higher standard of country life. Scientific agriculture itself is the beginning in this higher standard. A thorough knowledge of the country population is, however, the Church's great duty for without the supreme sanction of religious institutions the improved country school will never come into general favor; and without the approval and forwarding of the country church scientific agriculture will always labor under the stunted approval which has come to the farmers' institute in the past. It is the duty of the country church to direct the highest social and economic life of the country population. This duty from her own point of view means the problem of actual survival. But from the viewpoint of the community as a whole, it is the largest religious problem that can be presented to ministers and officers of country churches.





